
**Natural Resources, Ecology &
Parks Committee**

HB 2374

Brief Description: Requiring public motorized access plans for department of natural resources' lands.

Sponsors: Representative Pearson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Natural Resources to adopt the necessary policies to ensure that there is no net loss of road or trail miles open to public motorized access within each administrative unit.

Hearing Date: 1/12/06

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Multiple use management

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages 2.1 million acres of forest land under a multiple use mandate (RCW 79.10.100). Multiple use management means providing for several uses simultaneously on a single tract of forest land (RCW 79.10.110). Multiple uses, including recreational trails for motorized vehicles, must be compatible with the financial obligations of trust management (RCW 79.10.120).

According to the DNR, there are 143 recreational facilities and over 400 miles of designated trails for both off-road vehicles (ORVs) and other forms of motorized recreation. This includes nine designated ORV areas statewide.

DNR's administrative units

For administrative purposes, the DNR is composed of a series of administrative units. The state is currently broken down into six such regions: Northeast, Southeast, Pacific Cascade, South Puget Sound, Northwest, and Olympic. The configuration and number of these regions have historically been determined by the DNR.

Off-road vehicle funding

One percent of tax revenues collected from motor vehicle fuels is dedicated to various public entities for non-highway road recreation enhancement and management. Of these funds, 36 percent is dedicated to the DNR to be used solely for the acquisition, planning, development, maintenance, and management of recreation facilities and information programs for ORVs, non-motorized recreation, and non-highway roads.

Summary of Bill:

The DNR is required to prepare and maintain individual public motorized access plans for each of the DNR's administrative units. The plans must estimate the miles of road or trail that were open to either street-legal vehicles or off-road vehicles in each administrative unit in 2003. In units where the current number of road or trail miles open to public motorized access is less than the 2003 level, the DNR must make the changes in access policy necessary to bring the current mileage of open roads or trails back up to the 2003 level. Future road or trail access closure decisions made by the DNR must be coupled with an opening of an equal number of trail or road miles within the same administrative unit. Initial planning must be completed by April 1, 2007, with implementation beginning no later than August 1, 2007.

The process for calculating the miles of trail or road open in an administrative unit may not include miles of road that are temporarily open to accommodate an active forest harvest site. The process may, however, include road or trail miles that are temporarily closed to public access due to fire safety considerations.

If the DNR fails to fully demonstrate compliance with their motorized access plans, the portion of the ORV and Nonhighway Vehicle Account that is earmarked for the DNR is instead allocated to the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation to be used for ORV recreation facilities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/3/06.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.